

19th June 2025: Deanery Update from Fr Jonathan How

Pastoral Plan - The Word who is life: The call to mission

In January 2024 Bishop Richard published the third edition of the Pastoral Plan, The Word who is Life: the call to mission. He reiterated his vision: *'I therefore take this opportunity to invite everyone in the Diocese – lay faithful and religious, deacons and priests – to join with me in forging our parishes into communities of saints, into strong, lively and welcoming schools of discipleship. May they be communities where the Lord is known and loved; where the liturgy is experienced as an encounter with the wonder of heaven; where daily prayer is a natural part of life; communities of healing, where all are welcomed, their dignity as children of God always recognised; where young people grow in deep love for the Gospel, for the sacramental life of the Church and for prayer; where all know the riches of the Faith and seek to share it with others'*.

This last year has been marked by a number of meetings of parish pastoral teams and other parish representative, helping to develop a great awareness of our gifts for mission, how the Holy Spirit is at work in our present parishes and the opportunities for working more closely together.

Many of our parishes and communities have seen new people join them in this last year and new people step up to support our mission. This is timely, as the recent Bible Society report, The Quiet Revival points to an increasing number of people - especially young adults - looking to find God in the Catholic Church.

Output from Deanery Congress: On 17th May we held a Deanery Congress with nearly 100 people present from all of the parishes in our deanery. The basic feedback from that meeting will now help our teams to shape our work going forward. They will be doing their own analysis but you can read an initial summary [here](#).

Steering Team for the New Parish: We put out an open call for people to serve on a steering team for the new parish. I am grateful to all who offered to serve (no offer will be wasted!) and am pleased to confirm that the following have agreed to serve: Frances Blackett, Zelma Braganza, Tim Edwards, Eli James, James Kibble, and Peter Reintges. This team will now work with the clergy team to help develop an action plan

for our new parish, taking the gifts and talents of our communities and helping to ensure that they contribute to the mission. I hope that they will introduce themselves to the rest of the deanery in the coming months and look forward to working with them.

What next?

Bishop Richard expressed a hope that new parishes might be formed from existing deaneries in 2025. In the coming weeks he will be concluding the formal consultations needed to do that for Guildford Deanery. Over the last couple of weeks Mgr Tony Barry and I have sought the views of the chairs of parish finance and pastoral teams, and these will form part of that process. I expect that we will learn more from Bishop Richard once this process has been completed.

This is the fruit of a process of discernment that can be traced back to deanery working parties in the late 1980s and the McConnon Report of 1995. The more specific pastoral plan in which we are now engaged is deeply rooted in Christ's command to '*make disciples of all the nations*' and the New Evangelisation needed in the current age. It is the result of a process of listening and prayer that began shortly after Bishop Richard arrived as Bishop of Arundel & Brighton.

Wherever we are in the process of becoming a parish rather than a deanery, I am confident that we will continue to grow as a community of communities, that what we do will increasingly serve the mission entrusted to us, and that the Lord will increasingly send labourers into his harvest.

Please pray for our Diocese and our communities:

Lord, the Word who is Life, May all the people of our Diocese grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit, so that through a growth in understanding and courage, and truly open to your call, we may bear powerful witness to all around us, for you are Lord for ever and ever, Amen.